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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY





THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600 12 November 1965

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HIGHLIGHTS

Another major engagement between US and Viet Cong forces started today some 35 miles northwest of Saigon. A VC main force unit jumped a US battalion that was making a ground sweep following a B-52 Stratofortress bombing attack in the area. Viet Cong casualties so far are reported running about seven times US losses. On the political front, French President De Gaulle is reportedly planning to send a trusted diplomat on a tour of Hanoi, Peking, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh. His mission may be to sound out views on convening a new Geneva-type conference.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: A major battle raged today in Binh Duong Province as battalion-strength or larger Viet Cong forces launched a heavy attack against American infantrymen participating in a B-52 Stratofortress raid ground follow-up operation 10 miles north of Ben Cat (Paras. 1-3). Heavy fighting was reported during the night of 10-11 November between ARVN ranger units and an unknown number of Viet Cong in Phuoc Tuy Province, 35 miles southeast of Saigon (Para. 4). An ARVN company-size reaction force sustained heavy casualties when ambushed by the Viet Cong yesterday in Hau Nghia Province (Para. 5). Operation SILVER BAYONET by six battalions of the 3rd Brigade, US 1st Air Cavalry Division, has been initiated in the Plei Me area as a replacement for LONG REACH forces Operation BLUE MARLIN, the combined USMC/ARVN amphibious assault search-and-destroy operation initiated on 10 November north of Chu Lai continues according to plan, with no organized Viet Cong resistance reported thus far (Para. 8). namese Regional Forces troops have uncovered an extensive Viet Cong ammunition/mine cache and grenade workshop in the Mekong Delta province of Dinh Tuong (Para. 9). A prisoner recently captured by elements of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division near the Cambodian border west of Plei Me has claimed to be a member of the 66th Regiment, 304th PAVN Division (Para. 11).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky is due to return to Saigon tomorrow from his official trip to South Korea, having dropped earlier plans for an unofficial stopover in Japan (Para. 1). Government-employed dockworkers in Saigon reportedly went on strike yesterday for higher wages (Para. 2).

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American civilian, employed as a voluntary aid worker in the delta, has reportedly been slain by the Viet Cong (Para. 4). The Viet Cong Liberation Radio has again warned of retaliation if prisoners accused of terrorist activities are executed (Para. 5). General Thi, the commander in I Corps, is being accused by local Dai Viet Party members of financially helping the militant, anti-American Hué "student struggle" newspaper (Para. 6).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

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A considerable amount of SAM equipment has been destroyed by US air strikes since 17 October (Paras, 2-5).

- IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.
- V. Communist Political Developments: President De Gaulle is sending a trusted French diplomat on an official visit to Peking, Hanoi, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh, according to a French official in Laos. The trip may mark a new French initiative to sound out the attitudes of Asian governments on a new Genevatype conference (Paras. 1 and 2).

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VI. Other Major Aspects: The number of foreign ships calling at DRV ports in October remained well below the average set earlier in the year. The pattern of exports and imports through DRV ports yields further evidence of the dislocation of DRV inland transport by aerial attacks (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. A major battle raged in Binh Duong Province today as battalion-strength or larger Viet Cong forces launched a heavy attack against American infantrymen participating in a B-52 Stratofortress raid ground follow-up operation 10 miles north of Ben Cat.
- 2. The action at Binh Duong began yesterday when 18 USAF B-52s, striking in two waves of nine aircraft each, attacked two separate but adjacent enemy concentrations approximately 35 nautical miles northwest of Saigon. The target complex was believed to contain a base camp, supply and storage areas, and possibly elements of two Viet Congregiments.
- Poststrike ground exploitation of the target zone by the 7th ARVN Regiment (reinforced) began immediately after the final bomb run. addition, one battalion of the US 1st Infantry Division was deployed along Highway 13 to provide route security for the ARVN regiment's movements. Last night, while in a bivouac area, the US battalion was attacked by a Viet Cong main force unit employing heavy mortar, recoilless rifle, and machine-gun The battle continued into today, with initial US losses placed at 18 killed and 71 wounded; 11 M-113 armored personnel carriers were destroyed or damaged. Viet Cong losses thus far stand at 146 killed (US body count), three captured, and 50 weapons seized. No report has been received on the progress or results of ARVN participation in the ground probe.
- 4. Heavy fighting was reported during the night of 10-11 October in Phuoc Tuy Province, 35 miles southeast of Saigon. An ARVN Ranger unit reacting to enemy harassment of an outpost near the provincial capital of Phuoc Le, along National Route 15, was heavily engaged by a Communist force of undetermined strength. In the action that ensued, 17 government troops were killed and 10 wounded. Two additional

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ARVN relief battalions were subsequently dispatched to the scene. Supported by numerous tactical air strike sorties and by naval gunfire, Vietnamese ground forces ultimately forced the withdrawal of the attackers, killing 131 Viet Cong (ARVN body count) in the process.

- 5. The Viet Cong tactic of harassing a government installation and then ambushing reinforcements dispatched to the area worked with far greater success in Hau Nghia Province on 11 October. In this instance, an ARVN company, sent to relieve enemy pressure on the town of Cay Trom, was ambushed by an unknown number of guerrillas, losing 21 killed, 20 wounded, two missing, and 19 weapons captured; Communist losses were undetermined.
- 6. The 1st Brigade, US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), has terminated Operation LONG REACH, a search-and-destroy ground sweep conducted from 24 October to 9 November near the embattled Vietnamese Special Forces camp at Plei Me in the central high-lands of Pleiku Province. Cumulative Viet Cong losses have been placed at 216 killed) confirmed by US body count), an estimated additional 610 killed by air strikes, and 117 captured. In addition, the operational sweep forces captured 150 weapons (14 crewserved), 453 grenades, and considerable quantities of heavy-weapons and small-arms ammunition. American casualties totaled 55 killed and 194 wounded.
- 7. On 10 November, six battalions of the 3rd Brigade US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), initiated a new search-and-destroy operation in the Plei Me area that has been codenamed Operation SILVER BAYONET. No significant contact with the Viet Cong has been reported thus far.

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- 8. Operation BLUE MARLIN, the combined USMC-ARVN amphibious assault search-and-destroy operation initiated on 10 November north of Chu Lai continues according to plan, with no organized Viet Cong resistance reported thus far. Enemy losses to date stand at two killed and 18 suspects detained; no Allied casualties have been sustained thus far.
- 9. On 10 November, Vietnamese regional forces troops conducting a search-and-destroy operation in Dinh Tuong Province, 40 miles southwest of Saigon, uncovered an extensive Viet Cong ammunition/mine cache and a grenade workshop. The cache reportedly included 12,000 rounds of submachine-gun ammunition and 90 cases of small-arms ammunition. In addition, four guerrillas were killed, one captured, and two Russian rifles seized.
- 10. Viet Cong small-arms fire yesterday downed a US medical evacuation helicopter near Qui Nhon in central coastal Binh Dinh Province. Three of the aircraft's five-man crew were reported killed.
- ll. A prisoner captured by the US 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) near the Cambodian border west of Plei Me has claimed to be a member of the 66th Regiment, 304th PAVN Division. He stated that his regiment had infiltrated into South Vietnam less than two weeks ago along a route that paralleled the Cambodian border south of Route 19, and from there into the "Chu Prong secret base area" (unlocated). The unit did not participate in the fighting at Plei Me. At present, COMUSMACV cannot confirm the presence of any element of the 304th PAVN Division in South Vietnam.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

- 1. Premier Ky is now scheduled to return to Saigon tomorrow, having departed from Seoul today and bypassing Japan, but stopping overnight in Taipei. According to press accounts, a joint communiqué issued yesterday by the Vietnamese and South Koreans to conclude Ky's four-day official visit emphasized the agreement of both countries to promote closer trade and technical cooperation, and to continue examining the advisability of a friend-ship treaty. On the question of further ROK troops, press accounts note only that in the communiqué Ky pledged all possible support to Korean troops now in South Vietnam.
- 2. One hundred dockworkers in Saigon, employed in loading and unloading South Vietnamese Government owned vessels, reportedly went on strike yesterday to demand wage increases comparable to wages paid to stevedores servicing foreign-owned vessels. Although the strike has not yet been confirmed by the embassy, the US Mission has recently been focusing attention on the problem of wage disparities involving construction laborers and other types of workers required to support the US military build-up.

MACV has reported

that, in recent days, there have been a number of public demonstrations in Quang Tri, Quang Nam, Binh Dinh, and Phu Yen provinces—involving up to 1,000 persons—demanding that the Vietnamese Government release relatives from military service. These demonstrations are possibly Viet Cong instigated.

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- 4. Press reports state that a young American civilian employed by the International Voluntary Service organization was shot to death by the Viet Cong in the delta region. American officials reportedly have stated that early reports indicating that the civilian, Peter Hunting, had been the victim of a land mine were erroneous, and that he had apparently been trapped into an ambush by two Viet Cong agents posing as friends.
- 5. A statement issued by the Viet Cong Liberation Radio yesterday warned the US and Saigon governments of possible retaliation if 18 "patriots," scheduled to face a military trial in Saigon as spies and saboteurs, are executed. There is no official information available on any recent or pending trials of Communist terrorists, although it is known that executions are pending for some terrorists already sentenced to death. There is no information on any early plans to carry out such executions.
- 6. The American Consulate in Hué reports that a number of students belonging to the central faction of the Dai Viet Party in Hué have been spreading reports that I Corps commander General Thi is heavily subsidizing the militant, anti-American student newspaper, Sinh Vinh Hué. The consulate believes that such reports, not now known to have any basis in fact, could provoke a severe reaction from General Thi. Sinh Vinh Hué, a weekly that began publication in early October, is continuing to appear on newsstands in Hué with increasingly bitter attacks on American policies and a thinly veiled advocacy of neutralism.

SAM siles struck by US

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	III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM	·	
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	2. North Vietnam is estimated to have enough missile-associated equipment to operate 12 surface-		
	to-air sites. Since 17 October, nine operational	•	
•	SAM sites have been struck by US aircraft, inflict- ing considerable damage to missile-associated equip-		
	ment. The most expensive and delicate pieces of	•	
	equipmentthe radar and control vansare probably the scarcest in the North Vietnamese inventory. Of		· .
	the nine sites struck since 17 October, the central-	•	
	guidance and control revetments that house these radar and control vans have been destroyed at four		: ,
	sites. Thus, the total number of operational units		•
	could now be reduced to approximately eight.		
	3. USair strikes have reportedly destroyed		
	12 missile transporters in addition to the central- guidance and control revetments destroyed at four		
	sites. Two to four missile launchers and approxi-		
	mately 12 missiles also have been either damaged or destroyed.		
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5. In addition to the strikes on the nine SAM sites, a SAM support facility was struck on 7 November. This type of facility houses all the equipment needed for transporting, assembling, storing, maintaining, checking, and fueling missiles. It also stores major missile components such as fins, boosters, warheads, missile bodies, and component replacement parts. Thirty-five of the 59 buildings at this facility were destroyed or damaged in this strike. Twenty-one possible missile-engine canisters were strewn about the area. This is the only SAM support facility discovered thus far in North Vietnam. Others are thought to be deployed in the Hanoi and Thanh Hoa areas.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

- 1. The French chargé in Vientiane has told the US ambassador that within the next few days President De Gaulle is sending French diplomat Jean Chauvel on an official visit to Peking, Hanoi, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh. Chauvel, according to the chargé, played a prominent role in both the 1954 and 1962 Geneva conferences. The chargé also reported that his instructions require him to notify the Soviet ambassador in Vientiane before the trip is made public.
- 2. Such a trip, coming as it does on the heels of the visit to Moscow by French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville and the reported visit to Moscow by North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong, raises the possibility that the French may now feel the time is ripe for another attempt to feel out opinions on the convening of an international conference in Indo-China. Peking's negative attitude toward any such conference was harshly reaffirmed in its 11 November polemic blast at the Soviets.

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VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. The total number of foreign ships calling at North Vietnamese ports in October was 34, about the same number as in September. This level remains well below the January-October average of 43 calls per month. No exports of apatite ore or cement were noted in October, since the rail line used to bring these items from northwestern North Vietnam to the port at Haiphong has been closed by air strikes since July. Imports, which were somewhat heavier than usual in October, have piled up in the Haiphong area, providing further evidence that North Vietnam's transportation system is severely overstrained. As in the past, no shipments of arms or ammunition were identified.

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